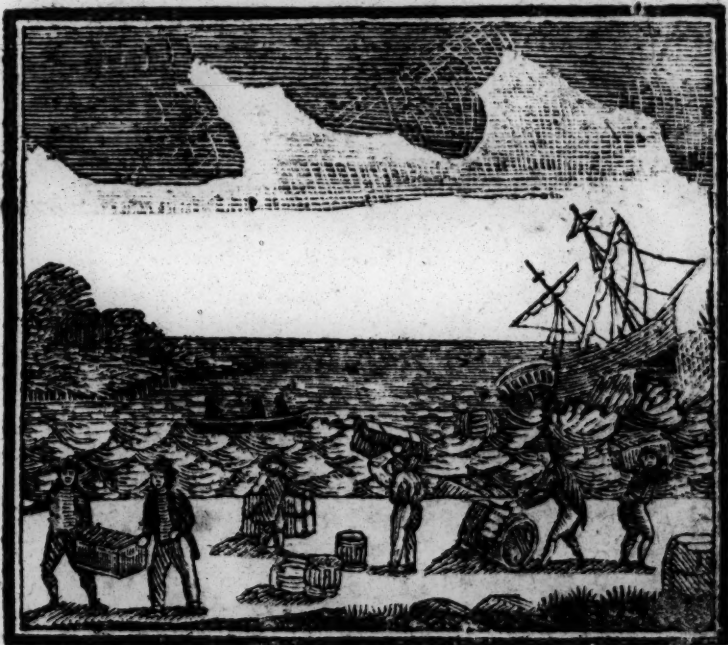


10
SUNDAY READING.

THE
SHIP-WRECK.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,
THE EXECUTION OF WILD ROBERT.



DUBLIN:

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PRICE ONE PENNY.

The W R E C K.

GOOD news! Good news! neighbour," said Richard Sparkes, the chandler, as he entered a shop where John Trueman, an honest taylor, was at work, "The vessel which has been these three hours fighting with the surge and winds for the harbour, has at last bulged. It is a trader from Amsterdam they say, and faith two thumping casks were floating before I left the beach; rare sport, master Trueman, rare sport, let me tell you a good blustering wind and a high surf

is no bad thing for a sea-port." Honest Trueman, who had not been long an inhabitant of the place, and was quite unacquainted with this language, which, to the disgrace of humanity, is too often used by the unfeeling on such occasions in sea-port towns, suspended his work, and listened to this harrangue with too much surprize to interrupt it; at length, said he, "do you call this rare sport? do you call this good news?"

Sparkes. To be sure I do, I mean to be out all night, the tide will return in about three hours, and I warrant it will bring us something worth looking after. But mayhap, as you are a new comer, Master Trueman, you do not know the go at these seasons, so I will tell you. You must know then when a vessel strikes, it is catch as catch can for her lading, one has as good a right as another, and he is the luckiest who can get most. We call it *going a wrecking*, and let me tell you, it is no bad business. There is my neighbour Perkins the Pilot, got the lord knows what by the smuggling cutter that was wrecked about three leagues from hence two months ago, ay, cask upon cask, of the best French brandy and tea, and I cannot tell you what he got, but he has held his head pretty high ever since. For, as good luck would have it, she
struck

struck upon a shoal of rock where the custom-house officers would not venture, so Perkins and a few more knowing ones, had it all to themselves: as I told you before, master Trueman, this *going a wrecking* is no bad business, so look about you.

Trueman. No bad business, neighbour! do you call it no bad business to rob and plunder your fellow creatures, at a moment too when their distress entitles them to your compassion and assistance? Fie, fie, neighbour, I thought you had been a man of better principles and more humanity.

Sparkes. Humanity! odds my life, neighbour, there's not a more tender-hearted fellow alive, many is the life my boat, when I was in the fishing trade has saved, from pure good will; but as to the matter of the *wrecking*, every man must take care of his own interest; charity you know, master Trueman, should begin at home.

Trueman. Our own interest, neighbour, should not make us rejoice in the misfortunes of our fellow-creatures; that you know is contrary to all the laws that God directs.

Sparkes. I rejoice in their misfortunes! bless your life, I owe them no more ill-will than the babe unborn. It was no fault
of

of mine that the vessel bulged you know, or that the master and the cabin boy were drowned; it is all the chance of war, master Trueman; one vessel is the same to me as another, provided it is well laden. I owe no one any ill-will, take my word for it; no, no, I hope I may go a wrecking and be a very good christian.

Trueman. Neighbour Sparkes, you certainly do not give yourself time to consider this matter; you talk of bearing your fellow creatures no ill-will; now I will only ask you one plain question, which will determine the point; can you from your heart say that you wished the vessel now wrecked on the coast, to have come safe into port?

Sparkes. Safe into port?—why—truly neighbour, now you are moralizing, you put such odd questions to one—safe into port?—Why you know my wishing one way or the other would not have made any difference. The vessel would have struck just the same, whether I wished it or not.

Trueman. Ah! neighbour, neighbour, you are afraid of asking yourself the question; take my word for it, you cannot obey the will of your Maker, who commands us to love our neighbours as ourselves, while you can view the distress of any fellow creature to take advantage of it.

Sparkes.

Sparkes. Look ye, neighbour, you are a religious man, and may think it all for the better to look deep into these matters; for my part I am a plain man, and do not think it necessary to have religion always in one's head; I believe I am as honest as most of my neighbours, and that is enough for me. As to loving my neighbour, I am always ready to do a good turn to any one when it falls in my way, and does not hurt my own interest, and I am sure you must see I go to church on a Sunday.

Trueman. As to having religion always in one's head, neighbour, I think the law of God should be present to the remembrance of us all, or how otherwise can we regulate our lives by it, which is the sole end of religion; for all our professions will avail nothing, if our actions do not shew they are sincere. Now neighbour Sparkes, this being clearly proved in the Scripture, it must behove you to examine whether your conduct with respect to this wrecking business, be conformable to the law of God and Christ, and not to deceive yourself by supposing you owe no ill will to those you are going to injure; for what is it, as the Scripture says, if a man gain the whole world and loose his own soul? Now, suppose my house was on fire, and instead of giving me what assistance lay in your power, you took advantage of my distress

distress to rob me of my goods, could it be said you owed me no ill-will, and that you acted towards me like a good neighbour.

Sparkes. Pshaw! that is quite another thing.

Trueman. It is exactly the same case; you may indeed think it differs, because you will perhaps say I am your acquaintance and neighbour, meaning that I live in the same street, but there is no distinction of this sort in the scriptures, by our neighbour, is there meant not merely those who live near or are personally known to us, but the whole world, rich and poor, whom we are commanded to love and render kindness to. Now, Sparkes, you cannot but know you go contrary to this law, when you can feel pleasure, from what motive soever, in the distress of any human being. However, I shall say no more on this point; but it is my duty neighbour, as we are upon the subject, to remind you that the eighth commandment forbids us *to steal*.

Sparkes. Come, Come, neighbour, that's being rather too free; are you going to make it out that I am a thief? It is the first time I assure you, Richard Sparkes was ever called so.

Trueman. Heaven forbid I should call you so wrongfully neighbour; let me ask
you

you, without offence, what right you have to any of the lading of the vessel that is shattered on the rocks?

Sparkes. Right! why, as much as any of my neighbours to be sure.

Trueman. That may be, but it does not prove that you have any right at all.

Sparkes. Why you make one mad to hear you, Trueman; if I do not have the goods, the sea or another will, and what the better will the owners be for that think you? You know it is a custom that has been of long standing in sea-ports; I have heard my grandfather talk of *going a wrecking*, and if, as you would have one believe, it is a bad custom, it is so old that it is not worth altering; it the same every where.

Trueman. Harkee, neighbour Sparkes, if you lived in a town full of highwaymen and pick-pockets, would you think it right or adviseable to follow the same trade?

Sparkes. All your argufying, neighbour, is quite clean from the purpose; now I suppose you will by-and-by make it out that we are a whole town full of thieves, and you the only honest man among us.

Trueman.

Trueman. I hope there are many honest men here as well as elsewhere, but I can never call that person honest, who on any pretence whatsoever, takes possession of what lawfully belongs to another. But you have not answered my question neighbour, I say, should you, if you lived among highwaymen and thieves, think it necessary to follow the same trade ?

Sparkes. Pshaw, neighbour, do you think I have not more regard for my character ?

Trueman. I should rather, neighbour, have heard you say to the commands of your Maker ; however, as you talk of character, believe me Sparkes, your character will equally suffer in the opinion of all honest men from the depredations you make on these mournful occasions. as if you were one of a gang of house breakers, for you know what you do is contrary to the laws ; if you did not find means to elude them, you would have all that you take so unjustly seized, and for ought I know be liable to a fine

Sparkes. Well, well, so much more is the pity, that is my business. I will tell you what Trueman, you may preach as long as you please, I do not pretend to be better than my grandfather, and as I told you *wrecking* was in fashion in his days, and his good old father before him.

Trueman.

Trueman. We are told in Scripture that the world was always wicked, more is the pity neighbour: but we read there were some good people among the bad, and I doubt not but there were in your grandfather's days those who had too much respect for the law of God, and too much love for their fellow creatures, to add bitterness to their distress by taking part in so iniquitous a custom as *going a wrecking*. Oh! neighbour, how should we feel just escaped from the fury of a tempestuous sea, to find ourselves plundered by those whose duty it was to protect us.

Sparkes. Well, master Trueman, this has been a pretty long sermon, and I must needs say some things in it have not been over civil, but as I know you meant it all in good part, I shall take it so, so your servant. One man has one way of thinking, another has another; you think *wrecking* a crying sin, and I think it lawful to open my door whenever fortune knocks at it. So your servant master Trueman. Saying this, Sparkes turned on his heel and went out of the shop, much nettled at the truths honest Trueman had addressed to him, though he pretended to call it off; indeed, indeed, sorry am I to say that Trueman's lecture made so little impression on him, that he went straight to the beach to see whether there was a possibility of braving the
the

the fury of the ocean to get possession of any of the lading which the violence of the sea had forced from the wreck, but seeing, to speak in his own words, that nothing was to be done at present, he returned home to wait till a calmer sea should favour his unjust design.

Trueman also soon after walked to the beach to take a view of the wreck, but the reader will readily believe that it gave rise to very different reflections in his mind ; the first emotion of his heart was gratitude to the Supreme Being who had permitted the lives of three out of five of the crew to be preserved ; his thoughts then naturally turned upon his omnipotence : " Who," said he, " can resist the power of the Almighty ? What is man, or the most perfect of his works before the God of nature ! this poor vessel, which is tossed here and there, stripped of its mast and rigging, and all its strong holds broken up, was formed with all the art man could devise, it was secured on every side, and the owners, no doubt, thought it would make a safe voyage ; but what is it when the the Lord causeth the sea to rise and the elements to contend : what is the life of man when the Lord pleaseth to demand it ? Poor miserable short sighted mortals that we are ! should we not, as the Psalmist says ' think upon the Lord always ' when we are liable every moment to be
called

called into his presence to answer for each mispent hour."

From these pious reflections, Trueman began to think on the owner of the vessel ; " what an expence," said he, " must it have been to fit out this vessel, what a loss it will be to the owner, it may be it is his all, and may plunge a numerous family in ruin ; if he is a rich man, how many poor families may it abridge of a meal, and how many a mechanic of a day's work, for the luxuries and charities of the rich help to support the poor. What a shattered condition," said he, " is the hulk in ! the sea will have all, but what such unprincipled men as my neighbour Sparkes save from it." This thought gave rise to another, which, as soon as he got home he communicated to his sons Thomas and John in these words. " My good boys you are not now to learn that it is your duty *to do unto all men as you would they should do unto you* ; I have from your infancy endeavoured to impress this truth on your minds, and I trust I have not failed: it is a rule the more valuable as it can be understood by every one, and its application is so general that there is scarcely any circumstance in which it may not be recurred to with advantage ; every one can tell how he would like others to deal with him, and by the same rule, how he ought to deal with others. Let us then apply this rule to the
case

case now before us. I will just state it and leave you to make the application. A vessel has been wrecked off this coast, the hulk is broken up by the violence of the sea, the cargo must therefore necessarily be lost; much might no doubt be taken up when the sea is calm, and the tide, which is now going out, returns. But the Captain who had the care of the vessel is unfortunately lost, and the owners are many miles off; before, therefore, the sad news reaches them, their property will probably be divided among a set of people who prefer their own worldly interest to the law of God. Now my lads, were we the owners of the vessel, should we not on such an occasion, wish that some kind hand was stretched forth to save, if not the whole, at least a part of our property? "Certainly father," said the lads, "we should be thankful to any one who would save ever such a small part of it." "Then," said the father, "we can be at no loss to know how to act; go you, therefore, Thomas to your uncle Godfrey, and beg the loan of his boat, which I know he will not refuse, and when the surf subsides, and the sea returns, we too, as it is the custom of this place, will go a wrecking."

The two lads were delighted with the thought, and Thomas, as it was now dusk, left his work and went to borrow his uncle's

cles's boat, which as Trueman foretold, was as readily lent ; about three hours after, the sea being perfectly calm, Trueman and his two sons put to sea pursuant to their honest and humane design, with as much alacrity, and as earnest a desire of success, as if it had been a voyage made expressly with a view to their own interest : they soon took up several casks of brandy and some chests containing some very valuable articles, which they got safe on shore and deposited in a barn belonging to a gentleman for whom Trueman worked, and of which he had the key. There could not be a pleasanter sight than these honest lads and their father exerting their strength to convey the treasures they had preserved to a place of safety, and returning, with all the alacrity of disinterested friendship, to the same labour of love. While they were engaged in this work, many ill-natured reflections were cast upon Trueman by those who being actuated only from selfish principles themselves, could form no idea of the acts of charity and kindness which the love of God can bring forth in the heart that is truly devoted to him. Some said he did what he did in the hope of getting a great reward of the owners of the vessel, and others that his sole view was to curry favour with the gentleman in whose barn the things were secured ; but honest Trueman

man did not suffer these malicious insinuations to interrupt him in the course of what he thought his duty. "Never be cast down, my lads," said he to his sons, "our neighbours may mistake our motives, for men can only judge by the outward appearance, but God looketh on the heart, we have only therefore, to see that all is right there, the rest is of little consequence." As he was returning laden from the beach, he was met by Sparkes, who seeing him laden, concluded, notwithstanding his scruples, that he had been a wrecking upon the same plan as he had, and accordingly addressed him with, "Ah, ah, my pious neighbour, I thought you would not find wrecking so bad a business as you would have fain made me believe: what, I suppose you chose to have it all your own way, eh? my old boy. No sharers of the spoil?" True-man acted from motives too pure to make a boast of what he had done; he contented himself, therefore, with simply replying, that the end would shew all things, and continued his way to the barn, where he deposited his burden with the rest. He then returned home, enjoying all those grateful reflections that never fail to attend the performance of a good action. "What we have saved, my lads," said he, "is but little to the great loss the owners of the vessel will sustain,

sustain, but that little is better saved than lost, and I am persuaded we shall all sleep the better for improving the opportunity afforded us of shewing our love to our neighbour."

The news of the wreck having reached the next town, which was some miles off, proper officers were, by day light the following morning, sent to secure the property of the sufferers, but such large depredations had been made on it, to the shame of the inhabitants of the village, that little but the hulk of the vessel remained, except what had been saved by honest Trueman, who immediately upon the arrival of the officers sent his son Thomas to deliver up the key of the barn, in the mean time, those who had attended the wreck upon less honest purposes, were busily employed in contriving means to conceal their ill gotten treasures, as they well knew they were liable to the search of the officers. As to Trueman he saw them the next morning at his door without the least emotion, but he could not help being a little surprized, when he understood that an information had been laid against him for detaining some casks of brandy. To this, Trueman, conscious of his innocence, replied, that all his little premises were open to their inspection. but what was his astonishment to see them rush into the yard and bring from a little

little shed; that was seldom opened, a cask with the name of the owner of the wrecked vessel on it. The officers instantly seized it, and poor Trueman, struck dumb with astonishment, was some minutes before he could attest his innocence, and declare his total ignorance how the cask came there, all he said was however to no purpose, the officers treated it as a falsehood to excuse all he did as a dishonesty, and laughed at the improbable tale, they said, he had framed so expeditiously. Fortunately at this moment Thomas, who had been to take home some work to a customer, returned, and was immediately recognized by the officer, for the lad that had delivered to him the key of the barn where the property saved from the wreck was deposited. Upon inquiry, he understood that the preservation had been effected by the honest labours of Trueman and his sons, and he could no longer doubt the innocence of a man who had so strictly signalized his honesty; he praised their integrity, and assured Trueman, he should not fail to represent his conduct to the gentleman who was owner of the vessel, and who could not but make him a handsome present for so generously saving him property to so large an amount. Trueman thanked the officer, but said what he had done was from no view of that sort, that with the assistance of his two boys he managed

ged to maintain his family very well, and that he had no ambition to be richer or greater than he was. The officers now left the house, shaking hands with Trueman, and calling him an honest hearty fellow: but though Trueman had every reason to believe that they were satisfied respecting the cask that had been seized on his premises, he was by no means satisfied himself; he could not conceive by what means it had come there, whether through malice or accident, but was conscious appearances were so strong against him, that doubts of his honesty might remain in their minds, and though, when compared with the favour of God, he held the opinion of men in the utmost contempt, he could not but feel that desire every honest man must feel of clearing his character from an unjust aspersions: this gave him some uneasiness, but as he found it impossible to discover who had conveyed the cask on his premises, he submitted with that quiet resignation for which he was at all times remarkable, and returned to his work with his usual cheerfulness. Innocence will, however, sooner or later be made manifest, and guilt covered with the shame ever its attendant. Richard Sparkes and three others, as unprincipled as himself, had hired a boat, and agreed to go shares in what they should pick up; to use his own phrase, "they had not had ill luck," but

but in the division so high a dispute had arisen, that one of the party, who thought himself aggrieved, resolved to be revenged, and actually laid an information with the officers; among other things, it appeared that Sparkes in their way home had got over Trueman's garden wall and conveyed into his shed a cask of brandy, and then laid an information out of pure spite, because, he said, he pretended to be better than his neighbours. Sparkes's house was instantly searched, and as he had no notice of the officers' coming, all the property he had so unjustly possessed himself of, was seized, and himself sent to prison, on account of the false information he had laid against Trueman.

Trueman's innocence was by these means proved. Two months after, as he was sitting at work in his shop, he was accosted by a gentleman who told him he was owner of the vessel which had been wrecked upon the coast, and that he was come to know what recompence he could make him for so generously exerting himself to save his property? Trueman assured the gentleman that he wished for no other recompence than what he had enjoyed, viz. the satisfaction of performing his duty, " what I did, Sir," said he, " was no more than what I should have thought it the duty of another to do by me, if the vessel had been
nine,

mine, and such a mishap had happened to her." The gentleman admired the moderation as much as the honesty of Trueman, and earnestly pressed him to accept his purse, which contained upwards of 50*l*. but this he absolutely refused; but seeing he should offend by wholly rejecting the offer, he consented to accept ten guineas, and the gentleman presented five to each of his sons. Honest Trueman's good fortune did not end here; the gentleman had numerous connections in the county where Trueman lived, to all of whom he recommended him, by relating the circumstances that had brought him to his knowledge; those who were not engaged readily employed him, and finding him a good workman, recommended him to others; customers daily resorted to his shop; his business encreased, and in a few years he became one of the most wealthy tradesmen in the county, preserving in his prosperity, that honesty, simplicity, and moderation which had been the foundation of his success. As to Richard Sparkes when he was released from prison, he pursued his old courses; wholly without principle or religion, he could not be otherwise than miserable; he went on with the old business of *wrecking*, and sometimes by his cunning eluded the vigilance of the magistrates, but his gains in the end did not make him richer, and some years after, as
he

he was carried to the work-house in the last stage of a consumption, brought on by his intemperance, he was heard to confess in a faint voice, as he passed the door of his old neighbour, Trueman, that even in our concerns with this world, "*honesty is the best policy.*"

T H E E N D.

The EXECUTION of WILD ROBERT.

Being a Warning to all Parents.

WILD ROBERT was a graceless Youth,
 And bold in every sin;
 In early life with petty thefts
 His course he did begin.

But those who deal in lesser sins
 In great will soon offend;
 And petty thefts not check'd betimes,
 In murder soon may end.

And now, like any beast of prey,
 Wild Robert shrunk from view,
 Save when at eve on Bagshot heath
 He met his harden'd crew.

With this fierce crew Wild Robert there
 On plunder set his mind;

And

And watch'd and prowl'd the live-long night
To rob and slay mankind.

But God, whose vengeance never sleeps,
Tho' he delays the blow,
Can in a single moment lay
The prosperous villain low.

One night, a fatal night indeed!
Within a neighb'ring wood,
A harmless passenger he robb'd,
And dy'd his hands in blood.

The direful deed perform'd, he went
To shew his golden spoils,
When vengeful Justice, unawares,
Surpris'd him in her toils.

Wild Robert seiz'd, at once was known,
(No crape hid his face)
Imprison'd, tried, condemn'd to die!
Soon run was Robert's race!

Since short the time the laws allow
To murderers doom'd to die,
How earnest should the suppliant wretch
To heaven for mercy cry!

But he, alas! no mercy sought,
Tho' summon'd to his fate;
The Cart drew near the Gallows Tree,
Where throng'd spectators wait.

Slow as he pass'd no pious tongue
Pour'd forth a pitying pray'r;
Abhorrence all who saw him felt,
He, horror and despair.

And

And now the dismal death-bell toll'd,
 The fatal chord was hung,
 While sudden, deep, and dreadful shrieks,
 Burst forth amid the throng.

Hark! 'tis his mother's voice he hears!
 Deep horror shakes his frame;
 'Tis rage and fury fill his breast,
 Not pity, love, or shame.

"One moment hold!" the mother cries,
 "His life one moment spare,
 "One kiss, my miserable child,
 "My Robert, once so dear!"

Hence, cruel mother, hence, he said,
 Oh! deaf to nature's cry;
 Your's is the fault I liv'd abhorr'd
 And unlamented die.

You gave me life, but with it gave
 What made that life a curse;
 My sins uncurb'd, my mind untaught,
 Soon grew from bad to worse.

I thought that if I scap'd the stroke
 Of man's avenging rod,
 All would be well, and I might mock
 The vengeful pow'r of God.

My hands no honest trade were taught,
 My tongue no pious pray'r;
 Uncheck'd I learnt to break the laws,
 To pilfer, lie, and swear.

The

The Sabbath bell, that toll'd to church,
 To me unheeded rung;
 God's holy name and word I curs'd
 With my blaspheming tongue.

No mercy now your ruin'd child
 Of heav'n can dare implore,
 I mock'd at grace, and now I fear
 My day of grace is o'er.

Blame not the law which dooms your son,
 Compar'd with you 'tis mild;
 'Tis you have sentenc'd me to death,
 To hell have doom'd your child.

He spoke, and fixing fast the chord,
 Resign'd his guilty breath;
 Down at his feet his mother fell,
 By conscience struck with death.

Ye parents, taught by this sad tale,
 Avoid the path she trod;
 And teach your sons in early years
 The fear and love of God.

So shall their days tho' doom'd to toil,
 With peace and hope be blest;
 And heav'n, when life's short task is o'er,
 Receive their souls to rest.

